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'A comparative analysis of the role of traditional and modern community-based organizations in promoting community development in Ogoniland, Nigeria'

Abstract

Given the failure of top-down initiatives to bring about community development (CD) in many developing countries, attention is switching to bottom-up approaches, one of which is to use community-based organizations (CBOs) as the conduit through which CD may be achieved. This paper compares the effectiveness of traditional CBOs (TCBOs) and modern CBOs (MCBOs) in fostering CD in eight communities in Ogoniland, Nigeria, where there is a long history of neglect and underdevelopment. The paper was based on extensive fieldwork carried out in eight Ogoni communities during 2013-2014, which involved 101 telephone interviews with residents (TIs), 67 face-to-face key informant interviews (KIs), 189 survey questionnaires (SQs), and three focus groups discussions (FGDs). The two main conclusions reached by this paper are that despite some praise expressed by respondents for their CBOs, the fashionable belief that CBOs are strong agents of bottom-up CD is not borne out by this study; and there is little difference between respondents' evaluations of the contributions to CD made by MCBOs and the much-vaunted TCBOs.

Introduction

Community-based organizations (CBOs) have frequently been characterized as a means of promoting community development (CD) in Africa (Opere, 2007; Onyeozu, 2010; Abegunde, 2009, Dinbaba, 2014; Kelsall, 2011). Often, these CBOs have been seen as making up for the failure of top-down attempts to achieve CD. For instance, Abegunde (2009, p. 1) claims that the "poor performance of government in meeting the socioeconomic quests of citizens has been identified as one of the reasons behind the proliferation of community based organizations". In their analysis of 114 CBOs in Delta state, south-south Nigeria, Ugboh and Tibi (2008) claim that CBOs are valuable agents for CD because they obtain funds through levies and donations to support agriculture, manage agricultural and rural development schemes, promote harmony among local people, assist communities assess proposals on how to achieve CD, serve as middlemen between government and communities, and arouse the political consciousness of community members. Narayan *et al* (2000) commend CBOs as the 21st century agents of bottom-up CD because they entail community members initiating and driving their own development. According to Yachkaschi (2008), Opere (2007) and Onyeozu (2010), CBOs as grass-root organizations take advantage of their deep-rootedness in the community to evaluate community needs in order to meet them. Dill (2010, p. 1) claims that there is a belief that CBO programmes are designed to "work with the grain" of their traditions.

It is the aim of the current study to test these endorsements of the value of CBOs, by investigating perceptions of their role held by residents in eight Ogoni communities in Rivers state in southern Nigeria. Before explaining the study, however, there are three preliminary

issues to be clarified. First, the term CBO must be defined. Blaikie (2006, p.1953) says that the concept is “porous, can absorb all manner of different” organizations. Some commentators such as Magadla (2008) argue that CBOs can be defined as organizations that serve the whole community. Other commentators include sectional groups in their definitions of CBOs. For example, Ajayi and Otuya (2005) distinguish between traditional indigenous CBOs (TCBOs) and sectional organizations in communities in Delta state, on grounds that traditional CBOs serve the whole community, whereas sectional organizations serve as sources of income only for their members, yet both groups are CBOs. The current study adopts the latter, inclusive approach of regarding both publicly-oriented and sectional groups as CBOs, differentiating them as traditional (TCBOs) and modern (MCBOs) respectively, noting that TCBOs originate from within communities, whereas MCBOs originate from without. TCBOs include formal governance organisations such as the Councils of Chiefs and Elders (CCE) and the Community Development Committees (CDC), together with youth and gender-based groups, dance, football, and cultural groups. MCBOs include environmental and charity groups, and town and residents’ groups.

More attention in the literature is focused on the role of TCBOs than MCBOs. For example, Kelsall (2008, p.1) claims that sustainable CD should go with the grain of the African tradition of indigenous CBOs, which are groups that are expert “in solving collective action problems and providing public goods...harness[ing] the motivating forces of family, ethnicity or religion”. Kendie and Guri (nd) praise the contributions of indigenous CBOs such as the *nnoboa* (community self-help groups); the *asafo* (community security groups); the *susu* (community savings and loans groups); the clan organizations; and the hunters’ groups, to CD in communities in northern Ghana. However, researchers are also beginning to study non-traditional or modern CBOs (MCBOs). For example, Adebayo (2012) reports the presence of three kinds of MCBOs in riverine communities of Ilaje, south-western Nigeria: small-scale business assistance organizations, cooperative groups, and technical professional associations. Onyeozu (2010) in his study of CBOs in Rivers state, suggests that modern social clubs work alongside TCBOs.

The second preliminary issue to be clarified is the meaning of the term ‘community development’ (CD). Bhattacharyya (2004) quotes Denise and Harris who report that CD “is as varied in definition as those who profess to practice it”. Since the early 1990s, most attention on CD in Ogoniland was focused on modernising the physical infrastructure of communities (Oguine, 2000; Omotola, 2007; Akinwale and Osabuohien, 2009). Subsequently, Shell embraced ‘softer’ goals such as human capital (e.g. education and skill development), and introduced microcredit schemes to boost the economic capital of local communities (Tuodolo, 2009; Burger, 2011). This later model of CD was less prescriptive, providing opportunities rather than buildings (Ekanem *et al.*, 2014). However, Cavaye (2001), Page and Czuba (1999), and Campbell and Jovchelovitch (2007) have argued that CD as a process should foster power in community members to drive their own development and lead their own lives. For example, Page and Czuba (1999, p.2) refers to CD not as an end but as a “process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities”.

The third preliminary issue to be clarified is the context in which the eight Ogoni communities exist. Without knowing the circumstances of Ogoni life, it will be hard to understand Ogoni perceptions of CBO and CD. The Ogoni indigenous people number about 832,000, according to the 2006 census (UNEP, 2011) and live in an area of about 1000 square kilometres in the south eastern part of Rivers state (Boele et al, 2001). With the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in K-Dere, Ebubu, Bodo West and Korokoro communities of Ogoniland in the mid-1950s and the subsequent expansion of oil exploration sites and facilities, Ogoni communities began to suffer severely from the effects of pollution which came from every stage of exploration (Fentiman and Zabbey, 2015). Even though Shell Petroleum Development Company, the only multinational oil company with a mining licence to operate in Ogoniland, moved out of Ogoni in 1993, Ogonis still experience harmful effects of oil pollution, not only because Shell oil pipelines continue to pass through their communities, but also because past incidents of oil pollutions have not been properly remediated (UNEP, 2011). The Nigerian government, which licensed out Ogoniland to Shell, has consistently prioritized national economic growth over remediation of localized oil pollution (ACHPR, 2002). Pollution and poor remediation allows oil to seep through into underground aquifers, and according to UNEP (2011), this has resulted in the pollution not only of the soil but also of the underground water, resulting in most sources of water in Ogoni being about 1,000 times more polluted than the Nigerian minimum safety standard. This devastation has not only affected the economic prospects, but also the cultural life, of Ogonis (Pegg and Zabbey, 2013; Fentiman and Zabbey, 2015), yet the Nigerian government seems “more receptive to the needs of oil companies rather than village communities” (Frynas, 2000, p. 41). Moreover, Human Rights Watch (2007, p.1) reported that some Ogoni communities lack basic education and health facilities. The majority of Ogoni people live on less than \$1 per day – an extent of poverty described by Ikejiaku (2009, p.15) as “poverty qua poverty”, a condition in which the vast majority find it difficult to feed and clothe themselves, have rooves over their heads, and acquire education beyond primary school level (see also Ekpenyong *et al*, 2010).

Despite these life-threatening health hazards, which UNEP (2011) link to Ogonis’ average life expectancy of less than 50 years, Ogonis’ complaints have not been met by either the Nigerian government or Shell (Pegg and Zabbey, 2013). It is true that the Nigerian government has attempted several initiatives to improve the conditions of Ogoni communities (Aghalino, 2002; Frynas, 2005; Rexler, 2010; Ugoh and Ukpere, 2010; Ering, 2013), yet most of the wealth generated from Ogoniland is not used to develop Ogoni communities but to benefit communities of major ethnic groups across Nigeria (Akpomuvie, 2011; Nbeta 2012; Tyoyila and Terhenmen, 2012). It is also true that Shell has invested in building infrastructures, awarded overseas scholarships, and funded training in employment skills. Indeed, Burger (2011, p.7) quoted the Managing Director of Shell who claimed that “in a region and country where publicly provided infrastructures and services are badly lacking, SPDC has often stepped in and acted in lieu of government”. However, critics have argued that due to poor engagement with local communities, the top-down, ‘expert’- based prescriptive models of CD practised by the state and the private sector do not reflect community-felt needs (Frynas, 2005; Idemudia, 2010; Aghalino, (nd); Idumange, 2011).

For all these reasons, Ogonis are development-poor and have over many years relied on self-help through their many and varied CBOs (Onyeozu, 2010; Ugboh and Tibi, 2007; Ajayi and Otuya, 2005). The current study seeks to investigate the performance of the innumerable CBOs in Ogoniland.

Methods

This study makes use primarily of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, relying heavily on telephone interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaires. Preparation for the first phase of fieldwork on this topic started in May 2013, beginning with a pilot study which entailed the collection of names, phone contacts and addresses of CBOs in Ogoniland. Information about 67 TCBOs was obtained from survey questionnaires (SQs), key informants (KIs) and focus groups discussions (FGDs). From this information, a list of 54 active TCBOs was drawn up. Information about registered MCBOs was obtained from Eleme, Gokana, Khana, and Tai local government council offices, and the Ministry of Youth Development, Port Harcourt, Rivers state, and a list of 405 MCBOs was compiled. However, many of the contact telephone numbers contained in the list of 405 MCBOs were unobtainable, and the researchers succeeded in contacting 101 MCBOs, which they engaged in telephone interviewing. In all, 155 CBOs were investigated out of a total of 472 identified.

The second phase of fieldwork took place between February and May, 2014, carried out in eight communities across the above four local government areas of Ogoniland to investigate the way residents of Ogoniland perceive the meaning of the concepts of CBO and CD, and the roles of TCBOs and MCBOs as agents of bottom-up CD. In this phase, 189 SQs were completed by current and past leaders of TCBOs within the communities of study. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, and questionnaires were carried out either by the researcher or an assistant. In addition, 67 key informants (KIs) were interviewed by the researcher (also recruited through snowball sampling) who were mostly members of TCBOs and beneficiaries/non-beneficiaries of MCBOs. Three FGDs were also conducted in three of the eight communities studied; most discussants were selected based on their in-depth knowledge of the subject of study.

The choice of Ebubu, Ogali, Lewe, K-Dere, Sii 2, Kaani, Korokoro and Nonwa communities situated in Eleme, Gokana, Khana and Tai local government areas, was based on their spread across all Ogoni local government areas (LGAs), and also on whether they are oil-rich or oil-poor. There are five oil-rich communities (Ebubu, Ogali, K-Dere, Korokoro, and Nonwa) and three oil-poor communities (Lewe, Sii 2, and Kaani). Although Shell no longer produces oil from Ogoniland, the five oil-rich communities still suffer serious pollution from Shell's facilities and spill locations (UNEP, 2011). While it is true that oil pollution knows no boundaries, oil-rich communities gain more attention and cash than do oil-poor communities in terms of compensation from Shell (Zandvliet and Pedro, 2002; Arisuokwu, 2012; Mohammed, 2013). The current study is interested in finding out whether there is any

difference between perceptions about TCBOs and MCBOs held by people living in oil-rich communities compared to people living in oil-poor communities.

The qualitative data gathered from the TIs, KIs, FGDs and SGs were transcribed and analysed thematically. Patterns between these sets of data were traced, and frequencies of themes were counted and worked out in percentages using Microsoft Excel.

Traditional and modern CBOs in Ogoniland

In this section, we report the perceptions of interview respondents on (1) the two types of CBOs in their communities (TCBOs and MCBOs); (2) the criteria of community development (CD); and (3) the respective performances of their TCBOs and MCBOs in meeting those criteria of CD.

TCBOs and MCBOs in Ogoniland

Traditional community-based organizations (TCBOs)

The total number of TCBOs studied was 54, divided into two tiers: the *first tier* (FTCBOs) comprises eight Councils of Chiefs and Elders (CCE), eight Community Development Committees (CDC), eight youth organizations (YO), and eight men's and 14 women's organizations (MWO). CCEs are made up of elderly men, usually the oldest members of families, generally perceived as living custodians of community culture, and they play a largely advisory role. According to key informant interviewee KI -18, *"they advise us and the first thing we do is to listen to our elders, we obey them because they were here before us and so they know better than us"*. KI-27 reports that membership of FTCBOs is *"right from birth"*, since TCBOs are kinship organizations, culturally structured to accommodate every adult in the community. Membership of FTCBOs is compulsory, because *"as a community member, you must, I use the word you must, identify with an organization, as a woman, you belong to the women group, a man, the men organization"*. KI-3 claims that FTCBOs *"cover every son and daughter of our community"*. Twenty-six respondents state that FTCBOs finance CD from community contributions like levies and dues. Survey questionnaire respondent SQ-132 reports that his community gets funds for CD *"through collective contribution from villagers"*. However, another source of funding, according to 32 respondents, comes from external assistance. For example KI-27 reports that FTCBOs get funds for CD from Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). Twelve respondents report that the government also sends funds into local communities via FTCBOs for CD. The 16 *second tier* (STCBOs) comprise dance groups, cultural/religious groups like 'Amonikpo' secret cult groups, age grades and football clubs. Membership of STCBOs is based on individuals' choice, by contrast to membership of FTCBOs which comes naturally to people, passed on through generations.

Modern community-based organizations (MCBOs)

The total number of MCBOs was 101, divided into four types: 53 environmental MCBOs; 43 charity MCBOs; three town MCBOs; and two resident MCBOs. It may seem that MCBOs are more like NGOs than CBOs in that they work across several communities and have their offices outside their catchment communities. Fifty four leaders of MCBOs, when asked what makes their organizations CBOs, say they work *with* local people (which suggests NGOs), while 43 say they work *for* local people (which suggests CBOs). We have classified them as CBOs partly because they usually identified themselves that way, and partly because they have come under the control of their host communities: about 65% of SQs and 60 % of KIs affirm that external MCBOs are permitted to operate by the leaders of their TCBOs. Results showed that most environmental MCBOs are funded by Shell, enabling them to employ professionally qualified staff, as TI-6 notes: *“our managers and directors are professionals in different fields...the top directors are professionals in various disciplines, followed by directorates, facilitators and then liaison officers”*. Only 19 out of the 53 environmental CBOs interviewed in this study say they fund their organizations through donations from well-wishers. The relationship between the leadership of these MCBOs and their beneficiaries can be described as that of the provider and the receiver. For example, TI-7 claims that *“our executive directors take decisions about the need of the communities”*, while KI-31 says that MCBOs decide by themselves what they think community members need. On charity MCBOs, although most have their offices outside their catchment communities, findings from this research revealed that some Christian charity religious organizations (CCROs) are resident in the communities studied. These 31 CCROs say they source their funding from within the host communities through church offerings, tithes and donations. An Apostolic cleric says *“we don’t get money from the government”* (TI-22). According to KIs, there is a proliferation of town and resident MCBOs across Ogoni-land because there is an inflow of non-Ogoni indigenes into Ogoniland: *“we have many Igbos, Yorubas and Akwaibom people that have their own organizations [town MCBOs]”*. KI-28 explains that ‘foreigners’ set up resident organizations as self-help organizations to take care of their needs.

The criteria of community development (CD)

When respondents were asked for their perceptions of community development (CD), two discourses of CD emerged: CD as infrastructural capital; and CD as human, economic, and social capital.

Community development as infrastructural capital

About 40% of TIs, all of whom are founders or executive members of MCBOs; 75% of SQs, who are mostly current and past leaders of TCBOs; and 10% of KIs, believe that CD means infrastructural capital. For example, KI-17 asserts that CD *“is the development of community not individuals in the community, we got a transformer, it was for the development of the community...now we have a transformer anytime there is power supply we [the community] enjoy it, that is development”*. Similarly, KI-18 holds that CD is purely about supplying

infrastructure to the community, and not about individual development. KI-10 states that CD is about *“everything, roads, schools...our organizations cannot help individuals”*.

Community development as human, economic, and social capital

The perception that CD is mainly about increasing human, economic, and social capital was held by about 20% of TIs; 30% of SQs; 70% of KIs; and three FGDs. This perception reflects an assumption that human, economic, and social development is prior to infrastructural development. For example, KI-1 asserts that *“if the human aspect is taken care of, individuals can then build the community”*. Twenty-seven KI respondents believe that human capital is enhanced through inclusive participatory processes in community decision-making that gives voice to community members. For example, KI-65 describes CD as entailing collective participation because it is *“something one person cannot do, we need to put our heads together so that our community can be developed”*. KI-29 points out that genuine CD ensures that the views of the least community member count, because *“participation is not only by who is giving but also who is receiving”*. FG-1 claims that *“empowering people that make up the community, intellectually, academically, is the most important because it is the key to development”*.

Evaluation of the role of TCBOs and MCBOs in promoting CD

TCBOs' performance

First, do TCBOs increase infrastructural capital? Beginning with *first tier* TCBOs, 25 community leaders and elites report that their various FTCBOs do invest in the community by providing infrastructure. For example, KI- 17 explains that his organization through communal efforts provided a transformer in their community; KI-6 says his community youth organization built a town hall; and SQ-114 reports that FTCBOs in his community worked together to add three blocks of classroom to their community secondary school. However, criticism of FTCBOs' attempts to provide infrastructural capital was common. The above claims that FTCBOs were agents of CD were refuted by about 70% of KIs; 25% of SQs and 3 FGDs. Allegations of fraud are frequent. For example:

SQ-7: *“our chiefs always demand for money from contractors...see all the uncompleted projects around”*.

FG-2: FTCBO leaders *“embezzle money meant for CD...our leaders collect money from the government and Shell and nothing gets to us...community leaders could bring in ten electricity poles and claim they brought in 100 pieces and you cannot confront them”*

KI-21: *“my chief got money to do 3 boreholes...he only did one in his compound”*

About 50% of KIs, 30% of SQs, and 3 FGDs allege that their leaders feast on community funds, though these allegations were contested by about 60% of SQs and 10% of KIs. About 60% of KIs say that the infrastructural capital is not designed to meet their felt needs but the prescriptions of their leaders. For example KI-6, a community leader, claims his FTCBO

(youth organization) built a town hall; but KI-25 says *“what they [community leaders] do is always town halls, sign posts. Am not saying that they are not good, but our problems are more than these petty projects”*. SQ-95 says: *“our leaders do not take us [poor] into consideration in all they do”*. Part of the problem is lack of funds: 22 SQs linked the inability of their FTCBOs/community to provide major infrastructure improvement to shortage of money. SQs-66 claims that *“we always want to do more but lack finance”*. Another part of the problem is disagreement over projects. KI-4 explains that misunderstanding between his community leaders/elites and members caused the destruction of the *“few projects that some of our organizations [FTCBOs] were able to do, it was a serious crisis...see what everywhere looks like”*. KI-21 notes that disagreement between a faction of youths and the leadership of his community resulted in *“over 50% of our houses were burnt; this crisis lasted for close to 8 years”*.

Second, do FTCBOs provide human, economic and social capital? There are two opposing perceptions on this issue from respondents. On the one hand, about 60% of SQs and 10% of KIs, who are mostly community leaders, claim that membership of FTCBOs is a source of both community participation and identity. For instance:

KI-27: *“they provide a platform for people to participate in community development”*.
KI-5: *“every member has equal rights, the poor participate actively but they don’t contribute financially...the poor and the rich can speak their minds”*.
KI-29: *they give me a sense of belonging...for example they want to know what am doing, it is interesting and I feel they love and care for me”*.

On the other hand, about 60% of KIs, 10% of SQs, and 3 FGDs refute these claims, arguing that their respective FTCBOs are discriminatory and do not provide for community participation. For example,

KI-39: *“our leader will not look your way if you are not influential, in our organization they only concentrate on the rich and people that are educated; they help themselves not people like me”*
KI-55: *if you are a poor member, “even when you raise up your hand in the meeting nobody will call you, they will pretend as if they did not see it and even when you get the opportunity to talk, it is treated like a poor man’s talk...senseless talk...nobody regards me, they don’t regard me as part of them”*.
KI-59: *“my organizations don’t need me because am not complete...they don’t have need for poor people like me”*.

Turning to *second tier* traditional community-based organizations (STCBOs), do they deliver infrastructure capital? Although few STCBOs are designed to provide infrastructure, one does – Amonikpo. The much celebrated achievement of this organization is the building of schools. KI-8 said the first primary school in his community was built by Amonikpo STCBO. On whether STCBOs contribute to human, social and economic capital, they are credited with significant impacts, both good and bad. Good impacts include the contributions made by football clubs. According to six KI and SQ respondents, football clubs are the most valuable agent of community development because they unite rather than divide community members.

SQ-69 says that *“our football tournaments bring people together, everybody is involved”*. Good impacts are also claimed for dance groups: four STCBO leaders insist their dance organizations contribute to CD because they preserve Ogoniland’s endangered culture. For example, SQ-21 claims *“our aim is to educate our children on our culture and develop cultural dance”*. However, some STCBOs are perceived to have negative impacts. For instance, cultural religious organizations, according to nine KI and SQ respondents, are not agents of CD. KI-65 explains that the Amonikpo cultural religious group/secret society is a human rights violator that brings division among his community members: *“that organization is a big problem...if you are not their member; you are not allowed to go out when they have their festival in April. You will remain indoors until after their festival, is this agent of development?”* KI-14 claims that the majority of Ogonis do not identify with Amonikpo or other secret religious organizations because *“we try to advance only good culture and values, we do away with bad ones”*. Respondents SQs- 43, 67, 101, and 155 and KIs-22, and 67 say that STCBOs do not contribute to the economic empowerment of community members because whatever money they get from cultural dances and festivals does not go into the community purse, but instead is used only by their own members.

Although, there are some positive evaluations of TCBOs, the many criticisms directed against both first tier and second tier TCBOs for their failure to fulfil the criteria for CD in Ogoniland, explains why Ogonis look to non-traditional or modern CBOs. For instance, KI-19 says *“we call for help from outside organizations...we have so many problems and no solutions”*. The next section looks at whether modern community-based organizations (MCBOs) fulfil the perceived criteria for CD.

MCBOs’ performance

Do MCBOs increase infrastructural capital? About 20% of KIs say that some charity MCBOs have contributed to the provision of infrastructure in their communities. KI-10 reports that they benefitted from six blocks of classrooms; KI-15 says they dug a borehole in his community which provides his community with potable drinking water; and KI-11 explains that charity MCBOs laid the foundation for a health centre in his community. Likewise, residential (or neighbourhood) MCBOs, according to TI-10, use members’ money for the development of their neighbourhood: *“we develop our area of residence, there is need to control flooding”*. On town MCBOs, positive evaluations come from KI-3: *“They sometimes contribute to the development of our community because we approach them for money in the way of fines for community development”*.

However, nine KI and SQ respondents assert that when charity MCBOs are involved in the provision of infrastructure, they seldom engage genuinely with community residents but only with community leaders. Some charity MCBOs themselves admit this: for example, TI-23, a charity group leader, explains that *“we cannot possibly engage with everybody but at least we try to do that through different leaders of their community organization”*. This means that infrastructural development obtained from charity MCBOs may not represent the genuine needs of local communities, but instead the priorities set by community elites. For example,

KI-30 says that MCBOs are “*hired contractors*” because “*they are only after themselves, most Shell officials own those organizations, they award contracts to them and make serious money*”. Four KI respondents say that resident MCBOs are primarily organizations set up to serve the interests of their own members. Twelve residents note that both resident and town MCBOs are primarily concerned with the infrastructural interests of their members, and only contribute occasionally to their host Ogoni communities.

On human, economic, and social capital, positive evaluations of charity MCBOs include statements by 13 out of 53 current community leaders that charity MCBOs work well in their communities. For example:

KI-5: “*some people came here and treated our people for different sicknesses at subsidized rate, they did quite a number of eye tests...Seeing our poverty level here, they decided to do for three thousand naira operations that cost like ten thousand naira at the general hospital*”.

KI-2: “*they put in resources to help our people, they have skill acquisition programmes, most of our women here have learnt how to do a lot of things like bakery...with paltry sum of money*”.

However, charity organisations are criticised for being essentially market-driven, or even fraudulent, organizations. For instance, KI-18 says a charity MCBO duped the community: “*they came here and I told them what they can do for us and that was to help in any way to bring up the educational level of our children. This organization now asked our people to pay four hundred naira each for passports, nothing came out of this... most of these organizations are fraudsters*”. Another criticism of MCBOs, made by 55% of KIs, 65% of SQs, and 2 FGDs, is remoteness: they are accused by respondents of failing to engage with them. For KI-14, “*they [MCBOs] don’t have any local knowledge of our community*”. Criticism of resident MCBOs focuses on the selectiveness of their benefits. For instance, KI-28 explains that foreigners establish resident MCBOs as self-help organizations that will take care of their own economic and social needs, not the needs of the wider community.

So although some positive evaluations are made of MCBOs, especially for their infrastructural and charitable contributions, they are heavily criticised for their market orientation, fraud, remoteness and self-servingness.

Discussion

From the above account of our fieldwork, two opposed sets of perceptions have emerged about the relationship between CBOs and CD in eight Ogoni communities:

- Many respondents perceive that their CBOs bring benefits to their communities
- Many respondents are highly critical of the shortcomings of their CBOs in delivering CD to their communities

How can these apparently contradictory sets of perceptions be reconciled? There are two possible explanations:

(1) The positive perceptions are about FTCBOs, whereas the negative perceptions are about MCBOs. There is some truth in this explanation, in that 23 of the 31 community leaders (SQs) who described their FTCBOs as natural agents of CD argue that they are irreplaceable. For example, SQ-18 says that *“if you remove our organizations [FTCBOs], our village will die. Outside organizations [MCBOs] can only partner with us, they cannot take over our organizations”*. However, this explanation ignores the many negative perceptions of FTCBOs, and the several positive perceptions of MCBOs, expressed by respondents. Thirty-three KIs, 26 SQs and three FGDs, think their communities will survive without FTCBOs, while 21 KI and SQ respondents see potential in MCBOs.

(2) The positive perceptions come mostly from respondents who are leaders of TCBOs/MCBOs, whereas the negative perceptions come mostly from respondents who are not leaders of TCBOs/MCBOs. It is true that leaders of CBOs tend to be more favourably disposed towards their CBOs than do non-leaders: 113 TCBO leaders (past and present) and 101 MCBOs leaders stated that their organizations provide CD. However, this is not the whole story, because there are some leaders who are highly critical of their TCBOs, and there are some non-leaders who are very enthusiastic about some of their CBOs.

The fact is that there are perceptions of good and bad CBOs in every category of CBOs and amongst all categories of respondent. However, we can discern a tendency among respondents to perceive that TCBOs favour traditional elites over the population as a whole, and we can draw the lesson that respondents wish to curb this tendency by introducing greater transparency and wider participation into FTCBO decision-making. Another discernible pattern is that respondents perceive that MCBOs tend to favour the sectional interests of their members over the public interest of their communities, and the lesson can be drawn that respondents favour the application of auditing processes to MCBOs to make them more accountable for their decisions.

Conclusion and recommendations for further study

In conclusion, although we found evidence that some respondents in Ogoni communities valued the contributions made by their community-based organisations (CBOs) to community development (CD), two critical findings emerged from this research. First, the fashionable belief that CBOs are strong agents of bottom-up CD is not borne out by this study of eight Ogoni communities, because neither their TCBOs nor their MCBOs are solely devoted to this task. On the contrary, there is evidence that at least some of these CBOs benefit from the continued underdevelopment of their local communities. Second, there is little difference between respondents' evaluations of the contributions to CD made by MCBOs and the much-vaunted communitarian TCBOs, which, unlike MCBOs, have the advantage of being internal. This is because both types of CBOs are inequalitarian in their structures and practise

prescribed (and even corrupt) forms of CD with limited community engagement or endorsement.

The paper recommends further study into the nature of Ogoni communities for two reasons. First, it would be very helpful to investigate what is required of CBOs in Ogoni communities to ensure that they provide CD as felt needs rather than as prescribed needs. Part of such research could involve investigating the middle ground between these two conceptions of needs, and establishing how far educational processes might transform some prescribed needs into felt needs¹. Second, although this research did not discover any significant difference in perceptions held by respondents in five oil-rich and three oil-poor Ogoni communities about the role of CBOs in delivering CD, this is an unexpected finding, and a comparable study of communities outside the oil-producing states in Nigeria could be used to test whether it is a reliable conclusion.

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¹ We are indebted to a CDJ reviewer for making this point

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